

VZCZCXRO6854
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHAB #0962/01 2561641
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 131641Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0848
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3525
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0463

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABIDJAN 000962

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W-EPLUMB AND INR/AA-BGRAVES, PARIS FOR
GD'ELIA, LONDON FOR RBELL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/12/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IV](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: COTE D'IVOIRE: FRANCE'S VIEW

REF: ABIDJAN 864

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES CYNTHIA AKUETTEH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) A
ND (D)

11. (C) Summary. French Deputy Chief of Mission Sebastien Minot told Poloff September 11 that the differences in the positions of the Ivorian government and the Forces Nouvelles on disarmament and identification may be difficult to reconcile and could derail the Ouagadougou Political Accord (OPA). Minot said it is unclear whether President Laurent Gbagbo will call for early elections or seek to remain in power through extensions of his presidential mandate. Minot said Gbagbo has a contradictory attitude towards France because in public he engages in anti-colonial rhetoric while in private he seeks a positive bilateral relationship. Minot said Gbagbo wants to meet with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, but that the French government believes it is not yet time for such a meeting to take place given the current situation in Cote d'Ivoire. End Summary.

Ouagadougou Political Accord

12. (C) French Deputy Chief of Mission Sebastien Minot (who was promoted a few weeks ago from his position as Political Counselor in Abidjan) told Poloff September 11 that the OPA has changed the Ivorian political landscape since the international community is now relegated to the role of spectator to plans to end the country's political crisis. Minot said both sides exhibited good will at the September 4 meeting of the OPA's Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, but were reluctant to respond to the Facilitator's request for specific dates for OPA implementation. According to Minot, lack of technical capacity, especially in the Prime Minister's office, has contributed to the slow pace of OPA implementation, but is not the only factor. Minot stated that the government's and Forces Nouvelles' positions on disarmament and identification are far apart and, while not irreconcilable, may be difficult to solve. Minot acknowledged that inability to reach agreement on those issues may render the OPA yet another agreement that fails to resolve the crisis and achieve permanent peace.

13. (C) Minot believes President Laurent Gbagbo wants full disarmament and a complete reunion of the country. Minot said Prime Minister Guillaume Soro wants to keep the Forces Nouvelles armed to remain in their good graces as well as to maintain leverage over Gbagbo. Minot added that, even if Soro believed in reunification of the country, he would be unable to convince the Forces Nouvelles to accept it. According to Minot, Gbagbo and Soro hold totally different concepts regarding reunification of the Armed Forces. Minot said Gbagbo believes a decision is needed on ranks for a

small number of Forces Nouvelles members who need to be absorbed into the country's Armed Forces. Soro, on the other hand, perceives that there are two separate armies that need to be melded together and resulting into a new Armed Forces with Forces Nouvelles members retaining their current ranks.

14. (C) According to Minot, since Soro must deliver identity cards to his northern supporters, he will insist that the identification process be as complete as possible. Minot said Gbagbo is fixated on elections and on the fear, which has plagued Ivorian politics for the last decade, that northerners will vote for Assembly of Republicans (Rassemblement des Republicains - RDR) party leader Alassane Dramane Ouattara.

Elections

15. (C) Minot said Gbagbo likes to float ideas and keep his options open and his August 6 call for quick elections (See Reftel) could have been an example of this. Minot noted that Gbagbo could take advantage of the fact that the international community is "less vigilant" at this time and that the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) lacks a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and call for early elections. However, Minot believes Gbagbo might also want to delay elections and remain as head of state through extensions of his mandate.

Bilateral Relationship

16. (C) Minot told Poloff that there are no bilateral problems between France and Cote d'Ivoire, but there are irritants. He

ABIDJAN 00000962 002 OF 002

said former French President Jacques Chirac and President Gbagbo did not speak to each other due to the personal antagonism that developed between them as a result of events in 2004. (Note: In November 2004, French "Licorne" peacekeeping troops destroyed the Ivorian air force on the ground in retaliation for a raid on a French military base in Bouake, which had killed nine French peacekeepers. Pro-government militia then whipped up anti-French feeling, resulting in the destruction of expatriate homes, businesses, and schools in Abidjan. French troops moved into Abidjan to secure major streets, bridges, and the airport and, in order to keep back thousands of demonstrators, fired shots. The Ivorian government claimed the French killed 63 and injured 1300. End Note.) According to Minot, France supports elections and has not changed its position on the Ivorian political crisis since the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis agreement in 2003. Minot noted that, while France still has commercial interests in Cote d'Ivoire, Ivorians delude themselves on its importance on the state of the French economy, which he described as minimal.

17. (C) According to Minot, President Gbagbo has a contradictory attitude towards France because in public he engages in anti-colonial rhetoric while in private he seeks a positive bilateral relationship. Minot noted that whenever Cote d'Ivoire encounters a problem, it appeals to France to solve it. Minot said the French response is that Cote d'Ivoire must solve its own problems, but that France can assist along with other international partners. Minot said Gbagbo wants to meet with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, but that Paris does not believe the situation in Cote d'Ivoire is "mature" enough yet for a meeting. In response to Poloff's questions about September 11 press reports that Gbagbo will travel to New York in September to meet Sarkozy on the margins of the UN General Assembly, Minot responded that there are currently no plans for a meeting, but did not dismiss that Gbagbo might travel to New York to seek such an encounter.

AKUETTEH